

Noise

by L8rose

Category: Harry Potter

Genre: Angst, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Characters: Harry P., Minerva M.

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-04-11 20:12:18

Updated: 2016-04-11 20:12:18

Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:42:25

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,362

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: "Coming back wasn't having a positive effect on him." After the final battle, Harry can't silence his guilty conscience. Smothering from his friends doesn't help, but he finds some comfort in the words of his no-nonsense professor. [complete] Brief mention of suicidal thoughts. No romance.

Noise

****Author's note:**** This is the result of a morose (and sleep-deprived) me who is on a Harry Potter kick.

****Warning:**** I feel obligated to say that there is a brief mention of suicidal thoughts, but despite the story being angsty, I don't think that there is anything seriously triggering.

****Disclaimer:**** I do not own Harry Potter.

****Noise****

He will hate watching the others struck down around him, knowing that it is for him that it happens. He will want to stop it at any cost. He will come. _(Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, _ p. 525)

A lone figure walked the grounds of Hogwarts, his silhouette the only thing in motion against the calm landscape. The Great Lake reflected a clear, star-filled sky and a nearly-full moon; snow had yet to fall, but the trees were bare and their branches reached out into the darkness. Despite the late hour and the cold air, the young man didn't bother trying to conceal or warm himself. What did punishment or a bit of sickness count for in the grand scheme of things? Losing points wasn't the end of the world. A case of the sniffles could never compare to being mauled by a werewolf or hit with Avada Kedavra.

Harry Potter had returned to finish his seventh year. It hadn't

really been necessaryâ€”the Ministry had offered him a job, choosing to overlook his lack of NEWTs and instead focus on his defeating Voldemortâ€”but Harry wanted to experience a relatively normal school year. Insofar, it wasn't unfolding the way he had hoped. Evidence of the damage inflicted on the castle during the Battle of Hogwarts was gone, but still the place bore painful reminders of all that had been lost: absences. He counted the faces he didn't see, the people he couldn't write to. The guilt and regret were overwhelming.

He usually wandered out of his dorm a few nights a week. Perhaps he thought that the sound of his footsteps could muffle the sound of his thoughts. He couldn't help but focus on the _what if_s, wondering what more he could have done and who else he could have saved _if only._ Asleep, he saw the same events play out over and over again in his mind's eye, every detail as vivid and gruesome as though it were happening again. Even when he was awake, he could easily recall the dead: Sirius falling through the Veil, Dumbledore falling from the Astronomy Tower, Snape bleeding out on the floor of the Shrieking Shack. Remus and Tonks, Colin Creevey, Lavender Brown, Fred. All gone.

So many. Too late. Not enough. My fault. I'm sorry.

Often he wondered if throwing himself off the Astronomy Tower or drowning himself in the Lake would be atonement enough for his failures.

Coming back wasn't having a positive effect on him.

Inner monologue still whirring, Harry sat down on the castle's stone steps. He propped his elbows on his knees and buried his face in his handsâ€”shivering slightly because he had neglected to put on a cloakâ€”and took deep breaths as he tried to quiet the noise in his head. Although he was not the only one to suffer loss, those around him seemed to be accepting the grief and moving on. He didn't know how to do that. His friends kept encouraging him not to isolate himself, but he sincerely couldn't fathom how anyone could stand his presence. Despite being a so-called "hero," he had an awful lot of blood on his hands. If not directly, then at least indirectly.

So caught up was he in his self-torture that he didn't notice the Headmistress approaching until she sat down next to him.

"Need I point out that curfew is long gone?"

Harry let his hands fall away, folding his arms around himself and leaning forwards slightly. Other than that, no response was forthcoming. He felt vaguely puzzled by the fact that her rhetorical question sounded more like a gentle reminder than a stern admonition, but he didn't give much thought to it.

Minerva McGonagall sighed. "You cannot spend the rest of your life ruminating over the past," she said gently.

"I think that depends on how long the rest of my life is." The words were out before Harry managed to censor them. He hid his face again. Another regret for the list: Burdening busy people with his depressing thoughts at obscenely late hoursâ€”or early, however one chose to look at it.

A hand was placed on his shoulder. "Harry-"

He was suddenly animated and interrupting whatever she'd been about to say: "I've served my purpose, I fulfilled the bloody prophecy. I got my friends injured and killed. People have laid down their lives for me. I'm famous for being a murderer. Yeah, Voldemort was undoubtedly evil, but that doesn't change the fact that I killed someone. And half the people I care about are dead. If I hadn't taken so long to do it, or if I hadn't been so stupid and recklessâ€¦".

He stopped to catch his breath. Adrenaline was fueling his diatribe, and that energy was now starting to leave him.

There was a pause as Professor McGonagall considered her next words. "Harry," she said again. "You are a remarkable young man. Nobody who died in this war died in vain, and anybody who laid down their life for you knew full well what they were doing and did so willingly. In addition, having 'served your purpose,' as you put it, does not mean that your future is limited. On the contrary, it means that you can finally live."

"But _how?"_ Harry asked in a small voice. "I can't. Not with all the noise in my head. Everything triggers the thoughts, so they just never stop. Intellectually, I get it that people made willing sacrifices and that people always die in war, but I don't believe it."

To his surprise, McGonagall pulled him into a hug. "I will not lie to you; you probably won't believe it for a while," she said. "You have lost more in your eighteen years than the average witch or wizard does in a lifetime. However, there are many who love you and will support you through this."

"Most people only care about The Boy Who Lived," Harry said flatly, although he buried his face in his professor's shoulder.

"That is true for some," McGonagall acknowledged, "but there are also many who care for you personally."

Harry was silent. Until tonight, he had yet to speak of his feelings out loud. It wasn't as onerous a task as he thought it would be, and maybe it even helped. Certainly, the safety of Professor McGonagall's firm embrace made him feel a little better. Despite the burning desire to shut himself in a room and never come out, the contact was nice, and he found himself missing it when she pulled away.

"I would like you to come to me at times like tonight." McGonagall regarded him with a serious expression. "I am available whenever you wish to talk, or if you simply need a shoulder to lean on."

There was more silence between them.

"I don't want to burden you," Harry said finally.

Her response was immediate: "I would not have said that if I thought you were a burden. And," she added with a leftward tilt of her head, "I am sure that your friends feel the same."

The ghost of a smile tugged at Harry's lips. Though he was still guilt-ridden and uncertain, he relished the offer of comfort from the

pragmatic Transfiguration Mistress. It was different from what Ginny or Ron or Hermione could provide, who were perhaps too close to him to have a balanced or broad view of the issue. He deliberated for a moment on what to say, but in the end he went for simplicity.

"Thank you."

The noise was a bit quieter.

End
file.